

## **Towards Smaller Smarter Government**

### ***Part Two      What it will mean for you***

In part one I looked at the importance of moving towards a smaller smarter government. Here I would like to further expand not only on what digital inclusion and a single legal government entity will mean for you but why the two must be closely linked if success is to be achieved. I measure success here as meaning the creation of a government that is able to respond in a much more proactive, timely, collaborative and efficient way to individual need, when and where it arises.

A single legal entity creates the platform for government to think and act around one clearly articulated proactive vision rather than, as is the case at present, seven separate departmental organisations each with their own priorities constantly struggling in an often reactive manner to emerging circumstances.

Digital inclusion would see the progressive reduction in the number duplicated and 'part' records now held on you in a variety of departments all over government into a single record and crucially the ownership and right of access of and to that data moved from various government departments to that of being owned and accessible by you.

In other words you would understand more clearly what your government was setting out to achieve and therefore be better able to engage as an elector in what that direction should be as well as having much greater rights over the accuracy and use of your data.

To some this might all seem a distant dream yet best practice in these areas already exists and is working well in other jurisdictions. There will be no need to reinvent the wheel to achieve these aims but simply learn from others where they are already moving ahead and adapt their ideas where we so wish, to suit our needs. Here are a few examples.

In 2004 Holland came to the conclusion that its community health care was bureaucratic and far from patient centric so their government decided radical change was needed. They introduced a new approach called Buurtzorg Community Care built around a technology system designed to support the front line practitioner in their work with their patient. It operates on the principle of measuring quality outcomes for people rather than arbitrary budgetary controlled inputs. As a result user satisfaction has very significantly increased, practitioners are more fulfilled whilst the bureaucracy, unnecessary intermediary management levels and endless process have been stripped out.

The concept was progressively rolled out right across the country and now has 6500 practitioners **and yet only 40 administrators**. This is a shining example of what can be achieved.

The parliament in Estonia has passed a law which means that the government can only collect information from an individual once but thereafter that information continues to be owned by the individual. They have the right to use it again and again in their transactions with government. In addition they can access it at their convenience to check that their data is correct and, crucially, inspect an audit trail to ensure no unauthorised access has taken place.

In the German equivalent of our GP surgeries it is the patient not the doctor who authorise access to an individual's medical records. Again it is the individual who owns their own medical records not the system. Have you seen your medical records? Do you know what is in them? Are they correct and complete? Are they always where they should be when they are needed? How many different medical records are there about you?

Here are a couple of innovations closer to home that you may very well have already heard about.

Firemen are highly trained and competent professionals so in some local authorities in England they are reinventing this important service as a true first response emergency service. In those areas it is not unusual to see fire service personal, also now trained as first response medics, driving ambulances so the capacity of the front line emergency service is further enhanced.

Some Police Forces in England are recognising that dealing with what might appear to be criminal incidents on the surface are in reality often closely linked with mental illness issues and as a result those forces have set up joint police and mental health practitioners teams who work together for better outcomes. You would only have to read our own Chief Constable's annual report that came out recently to appreciate the concerns that exists here about dealing better with mental health issues and early cross departmental collaborative interventions.

All these examples have something in common. They are either using technology to reduce the cost of administration and the bureaucratic drag on service delivery - then redirecting all the effort and savings made to front line services, or they are combining a variety of hitherto separate professional competencies into one service delivery team around individual need (or indeed both!).

If we are going to be capable of personalising government service to the individual we need a single strategy and policy hub for social policy, health education and home affairs. Actually this already exists as a subcommittee of the Council of Ministers but it is stifled and inhibited by the continued independent power and restrictive demarcation lines typical of the existing departmental system. So, we need to remove the departments within the health and social policy hub but retain the divisions and their respective directors if we are to achieve the stated aim above.

A senior subcommittee of the Council of Ministers also already exists for the environment and infrastructure but again progress is inhibited in the same way as it is in the social policy subcommittee and would benefit in the same way by removing the unnecessary and expensive departmental structures but retaining their divisions.

The Department of Economic Development would need to be retained as of course would the Treasury.

So a single government with a clear coordinated strategy better able to both respond to need as well as better able to see that need because each person is able to supervise their own single data record. A holistic approach and a personalised response – this is surely the right way towards smaller smarter government.

Part three will be both about how a smaller smarter government would interact and influence change in the way local authorities function and how it could lead to a more significant contribution from our parliamentary processes.

